

2020 ANNUAL REPORT

CITY OF RIO RANCHO, NEW MEXICO



FROM THE FIRE CHIEF'S DESK BY PAUL BEARCE



There is no doubt that the past year will be remembered in history books due to the COVID-19 pandemic and how the nation and the world had to adapt and overcome. We were not only faced with millions of people becoming infected with the Coronavirus, and hundreds of thousands succumbing to the disease, but we also faced the shutdown of restaurants and businesses, young school kids having to learn

remotely, and even our own work tasks being accomplished through Zoom. The year will also be etched in the memories of the men and women of Rio Rancho Fire and Rescue (RRFR) as a year of incredible challenges, being dedicated to our department and community, as well as learning to adjust through innovation and creativity.

In late February, 2020, I attended a presentation through Leadership New Mexico in Santa Fe. I had been accepted into the spring 2020 cohort into this program. Leadership NM helps get municipal, county, state, and private industry leaders together to form bonds and learn about the inner-workings of state government. Among the presentations I attended were Dr. Mike Richards from UNM Hospital and Dr. David Scrase. You may not know of Dr. Richards, but I have known him for many years and remember when he was an accepting physician at the UNMH Emergency Department. By now, you will likely recognize the name of Dr. Scrase, as he has been a principal expert during the state COVID updates.

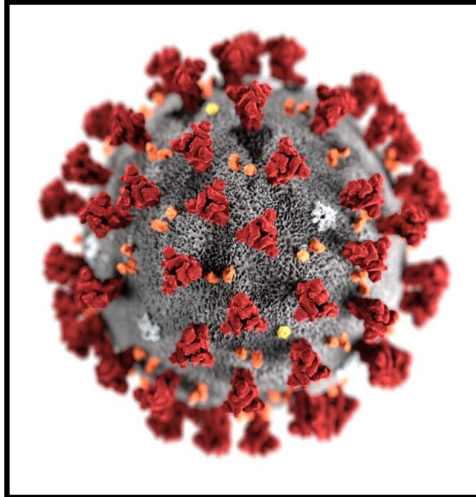
The interesting part about the Leadership program on that day is that both of these well-respected docs mentioned the COVID-19 virus. I remember vividly that Dr. Richards said that we are “due” to experience a pandemic, since the last one was 100-years-ago. “Is this the one?” he asked the group rhetorically. “We don’t really know yet, but it could be the one,” he added. How interesting it is for me to look back and hear his words and how

ominous those words sound when you put them into perspective of where we are now.

When I returned home from Santa Fe, I immediately began to have some serious discussions with our Emergency Manager Theresa Greeno, about preparing for the potential of COVID-19. I had completed a pandemic operations plan back in the early 2000s for a class I was taking, so I dusted that off and we began to look at how we were going to respond.

RRFR personnel soon kicked into high-gear and reports of

COVID infections began to come across our news feeds. New Mexico was a late-comer into these reports as we didn’t have any confirmed cases until March 11, when four citizens were suspected of having the virus. The state began to scramble resources and issue Public Health Orders to help stem the spread of the infection. Very soon after this, we began to experience difficulties in obtaining much needed personal protective equipment (PPE) and supplies, such as gloves, masks, gowns, and sanitizer. Agencies across the U.S. began to place large orders to fill their



supply caches. There was even a run at the grocery stores as the public snatched up toilet paper, bottled water, and cleaning supplies.

We had to get creative. Our Office of Emergency Management’s Rose Martinez reached out to volunteers from our community to supply our frontline responders with hand-made masks. By the time we were done, we had over 4,000 masks that were sewn by some very dedicated citizens. We used these to outfit our firefighters, and all of our City staff. Some of the masks were donated to people who had no other means to obtain a mask. We researched how to sanitize medical-grade masks so they could be reused and Deputy Chief Jimmy DeFillippo found a sanitizing agent that is used in commercial chicken processing plants.

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Lt. Travis Locher modified an self-contained-breathing-apparatus (SCBA) and connected it to a paint gun to mist the chemical on surfaces to decontaminate after a call. We were contacted by Tito's Vodka who suspended their production to produce an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. We received over 100-gallons of it. Of course, we could only take delivery after signing a waiver that we wouldn't drink it!

With approval from City leadership, we placed numerous orders to get in line for additional orders of PPE. We also received some shipments from the allotment that the state had been issued through the Strategic National Stockpile. Capt. Dave Hoeksema worked with our partners at Albuquerque Fire Rescue to make protective gowns out of sheets of plastic. Our personnel searched high and low to meet an ever-increasing demand for these items. No stone was left unturned. However, PPE wasn't our only challenge.

Throughout the pandemic our priority has always been to keep the men and women who respond to emergency incidents safe as they perform their daily tasks. Early in the health crisis we implemented changes in our procedures and protocols to help our personnel avoid potential infection. We worked closely with our dispatch center to be notified of potential COVID-positive patients, and we required that all personnel don the highest level of PPE on those incidents. We also implemented thorough decontamination procedures



Firefighters display handmade masks donated to the department.



Lt. Travis Locher demonstrates the use of a modified SCBA and paint gun to disinfect the back of a rescue.

for apparatus, equipment, personnel, and their clothing after each encounter with a potential COVID patient. Public access to our stations was limited to crews and we stopped all public-outreach events.

As the number of cases increased across the state, we held strong with no firefighter testing positive for COVID. We had several individuals who became ill, but they tested negative. In October that changed with our first reported case. There were no documented cases of occupational exposure from patients.

Throughout the pandemic RRFR personnel continued to respond to fire, medical, technical rescue, and service incidents as

part of our normal duties. In addition, they provided medical treatment and transport of COVID patients. We also had to adapt our delivery of training by modifying classroom curriculum through virtual means. Due to the nature of our services, there was some hands-on training that still needed to be conducted in live skills review sessions. However, these were conducted using COVID safe practices. As with most of the nation's

businesses, we had to learn how to use Zoom and other virtual meeting platforms for our Command Staff meetings and planning sessions. Teleworking became something we had never experienced before, but several members of our administrative staff performed some of their work remotely.

As a nation, we just passed the one-year anniversary of the COVID-19 virus changing our everyday lives. We have all learned to adapt to keep ourselves and our families safe and healthy. The men and

women of RRFR will likely experience some of these new protocols and procedures for the foreseeable future. Our world and our lives have been changed. To use an overused term – it has become our 'new normal.'

We will continue to provide the highest level of emergency care and response to our community because we care and we are here to help. We will always live up to the motto emblazoned on the side of our trucks, "Protecting Your Family." Our community is our family and that is what we do.

Looking back on 2020 and the challenges faced by Rio Rancho Fire and Rescue (RRFR) Department, the community, and its members, I cannot help but feel accomplished in all we have been dealt and have overcome over the past year. RRFR started to see an increase in call volume with growing concerns for Personal Protective Equipment shortages. As department members and vendors began to scramble to compile enough supplies to keep crews protected during worldwide shortages, we had countless community volunteers step up to donate both their time and their money toward our efforts. These donations were humbling as well as crucial to the continued operation of the department.

RRFR staff managed the logistics and created a COVID guidebook for the entire city to ensure proper use of Personal Protective Equipment, hand sanitizer, N95 masks and other items to keep all employees safe. With help from the Tulsa, Oklahoma Fire Department, we were even able to address our shortage of disinfectant with Hypochlorous Acid (HoCL), a disinfectant that is up to 100-times stronger than bleach, and yet, safe to handle. This innovative approach from our staff proved to be the saving grace for keeping our patients and firefighters safe and COVID-free.

The pandemic was not the only focus of the department over the last year. Last year was also a general obligation



Capt. Robert Bacon receives the COVID vaccine from PM Shianne Mitchell during one of the early clinics for firefighters.

bond year which was approved by the citizens with an overwhelming 72% voter approval. This GO bond allowed for RRFR to continue to address fleet issues due to our aging apparatus. We purchased a brand-new fire engine and 107-foot aerial ladder truck to replace trucks with well over 120,000 miles on them. These apparatus were long overdue and the support we received to replace them was appreciated by department members, keeping them all safe and up to date with the latest technology to deploy their skills. In addition to the apparatus, we also received three new Zoll 12 lead defibrillator-monitors, which completely outfitted all first-out advanced life support (ALS) units with the latest technology in cardiac care. Another auto CPR device was added to our deployment which has proved to be key in sudden cardiac arrest patient survival rates. We were able to secure funding for a remodel of Fire Station 5 in Enchanted Hills. This station was originally built in 1999 and designed as a Department of Public Safety

substation. The remodel will consist of an updated kitchen and living facility as well as gym and sleeping quarters for the firefighters.

Academy class #15 was conducted and completed with the addition of three firefighters to the department. We had three new paramedics graduate from both the University of New Mexico EMS Academy and Albuquerque Fire and Rescues Paramedic Academy. RRFR continued our relationship with the UNM EMSA and sent an additional three firefighters to the hybrid paramedic program this year with a graduation date of summer 2021.

Lastly, we saw a changing of the guard with the retirements of a Deputy Chief, Battalion Chief, and multiple Captains. RRFR was able to proudly promote the following embers of service into some interim and permanent positions ranging from Deputy Chief Marc Sandoval; Battalion Chiefs Ryan Floersheim and Daniel Chavez; Captain Bradley Kornrumpf, Daniel Wild, Norm Michel, and Elliot Guinn; Lieutenant Brandon Kaupa and Billy Martinez; and Engineer Eric Kaufman. All of these members of service stepped into a new role with new challenges, and all have shown tremendous pride and dedication to keep RRFR as a top performing agency. The men and women of RRFR have proven, yet again, what it means to be selfless and supportive of the community. They continue to show up in times of need, providing compassion and professionalism, which continues to make me proud to wear the uniform and be a part of RRFR.

OPERATIONS REPORT

BY ACTING DEP. CHIEF MARC SANDOVAL

The leadership of the Operations Division changed in this past year with the retirement of Deputy Chief Richard Doty after his 20-year career with Rio Rancho Fire and Rescue (RRFR). I was able to take the role from DC Doty, and in the first few months of my tenure, we have aimed to continue his programs, while looking toward the future.

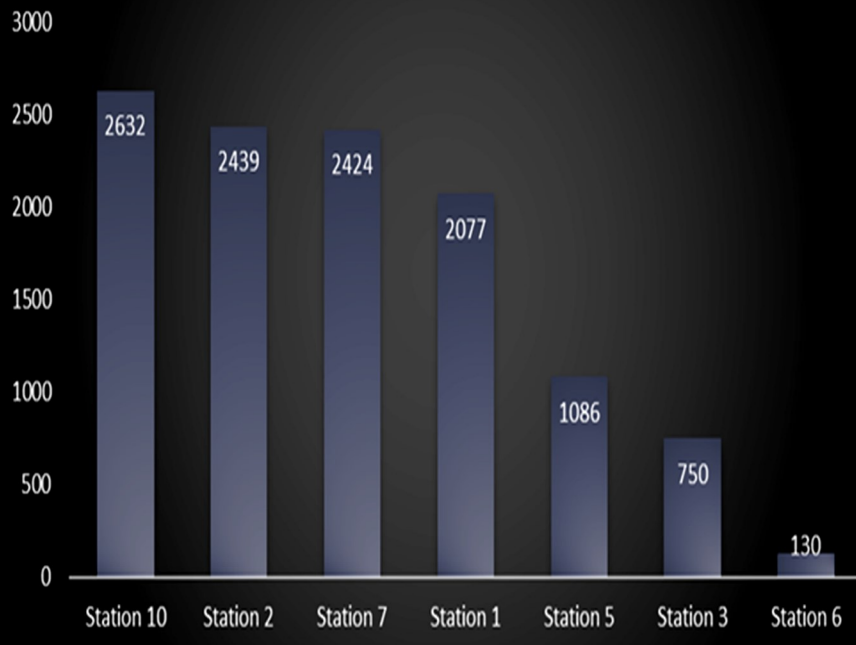
RRFR underwent an evaluation from the Insurance Service Office (ISO), which involves a detailed review of our operations, record keeping, training, water system, and emergency dispatch center. Since 2007, we were assigned a Class 4 designation, based on a 1-10 scale, with one being the best. In 2015, we moved to a Class 2 designation. The results of last year's evaluation concluded that we have maintained the Class II designation, which puts our department in the top 4% of all fire departments in the nation. Although much of the evaluation process was behind the scenes, the department's executive and administrative staff were busy gathering data and records, as well as coordinating the process. The Department's executive staff, along with our Dispatch Center staff and leadership from our Utilities Department, were instrumental in assisting with this effort. We would like to thank everyone for the amazing collaboration and collective effort. The work we all put in allows for residential and commercial insurance customers the opportunity to benefit with lower rates.

Early on in the pandemic, the command staff began having biweekly meetings to ensure that the information that we were all receiving was accurate and timely, which was pushed out to the operations crews in a rapid and efficient manner.

The Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Division and our Medical Director were designated as the department's subject matter experts when it came to the development of protocols to keep our crews safe.

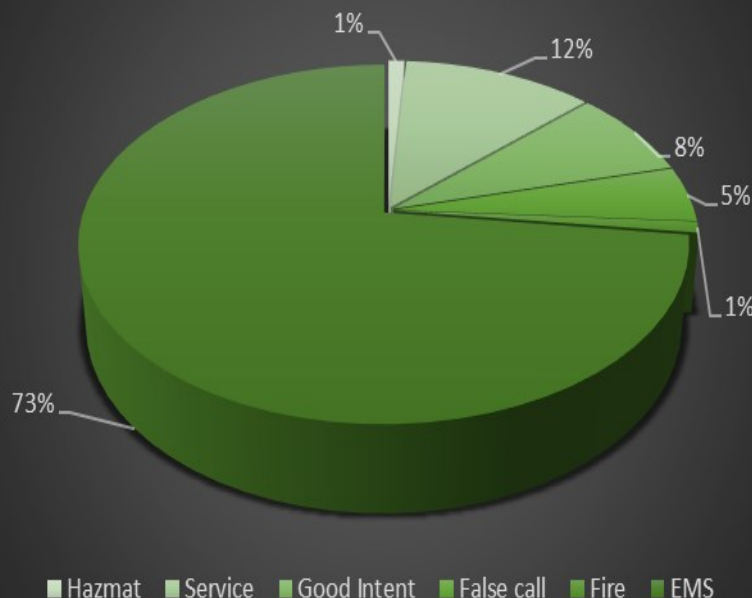
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RRFR 2020 Total Station Calls



Each Station's response numbers were tracked throughout the year. Stations 10, 2, 7, and 1 were similar in their incident responses. All are located in the southern Rio Rancho..

RRFR 2020 Incident Type Calls



Emergency Medical Services (EMS) responses remains the majority of the Department's responses every year. In 2020, EMS incidents were responsible for 73% of the emergency incident responses for RRFR.

A COVID Operations Guide was written and was updated throughout the year as things changed.

A contingency plan was developed if the infections reduced the available staffing and we were not able to cover the staffing of apparatus. Our plan was to move all personnel from their assigned shifts to create two operational shifts on a 24-hour on and 24-hours off model.

In 2020, RRFR responded to 11,539 calls for service which is up nearly 200 incidents from the previous year. In addition to COVID responses and the associated decontamination procedures for personnel and apparatus, RRFR personnel continued to respond to fire, behavioral health incidents, and technical rescue emergencies.

Bringing the year to a close we had created new opportunities for advancement within the department for advancement. The influx of new faces and familiar faces in new positions has given us all a boost of pride and renewed focus on the future as we aim to make our community a safer place to live and work.

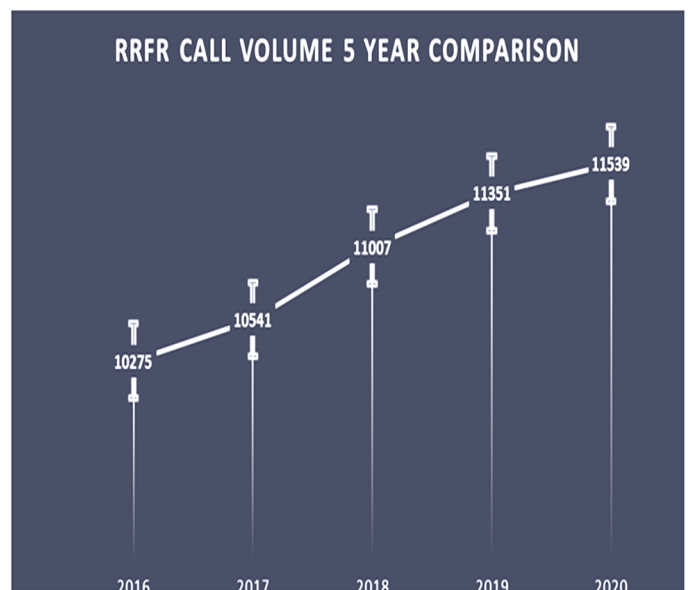
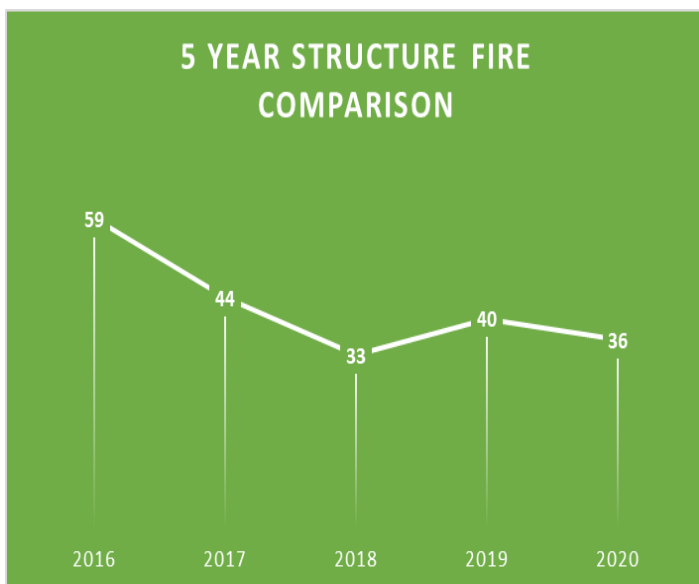


Firefighters work on the scene of a structure fire at the Rio Rancho Inn (above).



Crews move a trauma patient to an awaiting medical helicopter for transport to the hospital (right).

2020 RESPONSE STATISTICS (CONT'D)



A five year comparison of structure fires and incident responses show a decrease and increase respectively.

INVOLVED IN OUR COMMUNITY

Due to the public health crisis that spread across the globe, RRFR focused on the health and safety of our personnel by limiting our contacts outside of emergency response. This meant that many community outreach events were cancelled or moved to a virtual format. We were able to complete some in-person events prior to March of last year. We hope to resume our face-to-face activities in mid-2021.

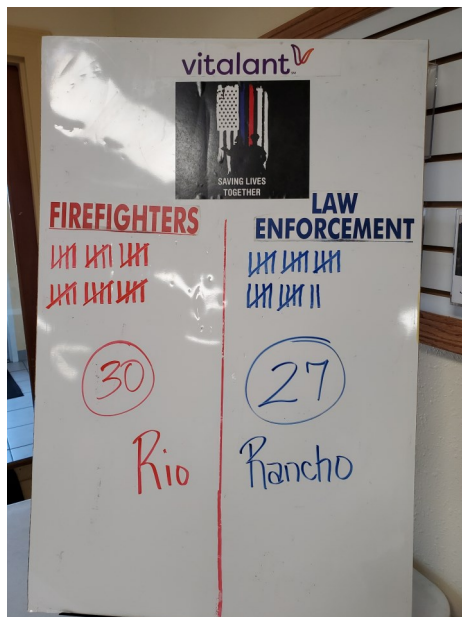
- Annual Open House—This year we provided safety videos and some glimpses into our operations virtually.
- Fire Prevention Month—All young elementary students receive annual fire prevention message.
- Many in our community requested participation in birthday parades, but due to
- the numerous requests and the focus on safety, we opted to provide a video of firefighters singing happy birthday to those who were celebrating a special day.
- Virtual career day for high school kids considering a career in health care.
- Virtual “Fill the Boot” campaign for the MDA.
- Virtual New Mexico Firefighters event for St. Baldrick’s Foundation raised \$32,500 for children’s cancer research.
- Battle of the Badges blood drive—FD vs PD. This year FD took the trophy for the number of blood donations.
- Remember the Night for firefighter behavioral health.



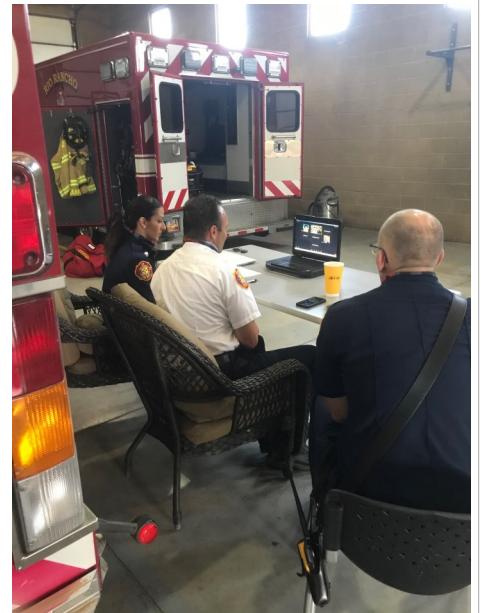
FF Reece Lucero gives a young girl a personal tour of a fire truck prior to the pandemic restrictions on station visits.



Arena manager Mat Bolinger and FF Aaron McDevitt get their head shaved during the virtual St. Baldrick's Event. The change to a virtual format occurred as the early COVID restrictions began.



Firefighters took the Battle of the Badges honors for the most blood donation votes.



BC Adam Arrossa and Lieutenants Jessica Duron-Martinez and Chris Mandeville participated in a virtual career day sponsored by UNM Health Sciences Center Rio Rancho.



Personnel participated in a lost/trapped firefighter drill which challenged them to remain calm and call for help when becoming trapped.



Crews reviewed the RIT pack usage for a downed firefighter.



Academy Class #15 graduated with three firefighters. Alejandro Sanchez, Aiden Aragon, and Nick Bonner have all completed their field training.

The year started with meticulous planning of the path to complete the yearly required training hours to keep all firefighters compliant with State of New Mexico and the Insurance Service Office (ISO) requirements. Each firefighter must log 260 hours of fire and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) training annually. This includes company drills, officer/driver, hazardous materials, facility drills, and each of the six categories of EMS training, of which half is required to be in-person learning.

As the year and the pandemic wore on, the controlling agencies and our executive staff recognized that meeting these requirements was simply not feasible. Between government-mandated restrictions and being committed to keeping our members safe, the decision was made to move all EMS training online and stop all in-person fire training. While exploring and learning new mediums as an output for training was demanding, we acknowledge and recognize it was not easy to receive from the firefighter's perspective. Everyone's patience and willingness to adapt right along with us was very much appreciated.

Despite the challenges of presenting all of this material in new formats, Rio Rancho Fire and Rescue (RRFR) still managed some very impressive training numbers: averaging 287 training hours per member

for all of 2020. Even with the State of New Mexico not requiring EMS renewal applicants to document their required continuing education hours, each RRFR member, who was recertifying in 2021, met all the required hours from their previous two-year period. These numbers could not have been possible without the members of the Fire and EMS Training Cadre going above and beyond. Thank you to each one of you for all your hard work.

This year also saw the end of an era. Captain Mike Legendre, after holding the Training Captain position for 4 years, decided to return to the position of station captain. Captain Legendre provided a lot of the foundations upon which training hours are completed. Captain James Wenzel has taken over the fire side of training and we look forward to him implementing his vision in 2021 and beyond, Captain Dave Hoeksema leads the EMS training.



Station crews adapted to small-group training during the COVID restrictions, including B-shift, who worked on fire stream management.

Life Savers

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Above: RRFR personnel who were involved in extricating this young girl from a car after she and her mother were involved in a crash with a semi-truck in October. Here they greeted her as she was released from the hospital.

Top Right: Station 3 saved the life of a woman in their district after she experienced a cardiac event in November. Her husband, a retired California firefighter/paramedic, was thankful.

Right: While off-duty, Capt. Jason DeBerg, and the on-duty Station 3 crew responded to a cardiac arrest incident involving Jason's neighbor in August. They were able to get his heart beating again, and he returned home to his family.



RRFR Retains ISO Rating

Kevin Jarvis from the Insurance Service Office looks over Engine 1 with Eng. Brian Johnson. Every three-to-five years ISO evaluates the department's ability to respond to structure fires by looking at RRFR's equipment, resources, deployment model, call volume and response times, training, and record keeping. In addition, the City's water system and our emergency dispatch center is inspected. RRFR retained a rating of 2 (on a 1-10 scale, with 1 being the best). An ISO rating of 2 places RRFR among the top 4-percent of the country.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

BY THERESA GREENO, EMERGENCY MGR.

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The City declared a local emergency on March 13, 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Little did we know then that, over a year later, we would still be operating under a emergency declaration.

The Emergency Operations Center (EOC) was activated virtually on that day to coordinate City departments' response, personal protective equipment, and to implement state mandates as they were issued. The EOC remained virtually activated until the end of the summer when Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) started to become readily available and cases had begun level off. There was a second wave of COVID cases that hit our area beginning in November and continued through December, but the City was much better prepared to handle that wave with teleworking policies already in place and PPE readily available for all staff.

Volunteers in the community reached out to help our first responders. Donating items from hand sanitizer, gloves, and many homemade masks. These masks were the first ones that were distributed and worn to help keep our frontline responders safe until larger supplies became available. Over 4,000 homemade masks were donated to the City of Rio Rancho by citizens. Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) volunteers assisted in meal deliveries, donation management, and at the State Emergency Operations Center as the Volunteer Organizations Active in Disasters (VOAD) representative.

The first completely online CERT training course was conducted in October 2020 with 10 participants. These community members learned emergency preparedness skills when it was valuable to them last year, and will be returning to do an in-person CPR course when it is safe to do so. Emergency Management Coordinator Rose Martinez and Paramedic Deidre Maurino did an amazing job developing and conducting the course.

In the fall, emergency management submitted the State Homeland Security Grant Program (SHSGP) application and was awarded \$421,137. These funds will be used for improvements to the Police Headquarters, Police's SWAT and ERT teams' equipment, as well as training and equipment for the Rio Grande Basin Heavy Technical Rescue team, and to continue funding for the CERT program. These funds are going to be helpful in moving all the programs forward over the next year.



The year ended with a light beginning to shine at the end of the tunnel. Rio Rancho Emergency Management and Rio Rancho Fire and Rescue (RRFR) started helping to conduct vaccination clinics for first responders and front-line medical workers in late December. Over 40 RRFR personnel were vaccinated at two of the initial clinics. These were the first clinics in Sandoval County and they brought hope that 2021 will lead to an end to the pandemic.



Donated hand sanitizer was distributed to fire departments in the region.



COVID-19 vaccines were distributed to first responders and other front line workers in December.



Masks were donated by dedicated volunteers. These were distributed to first responders and other front line workers.

Despite the circumstances that we all encountered last year due to the public health crisis, Rio Rancho Fire Rescue's (RRFR) Wildland Strike Team persevered through a busy fire season. In an effort to keep our crews safe and healthy, deployments in New Mexico were limited, and no out-of-state deployments occurred. The team adjusted to the challenges of the pandemic, yet managed to keep involved to help mitigate fires close to home.

Battalion Chief Marc Sandoval was able to get the team out on a couple of deployments as a COVID decontamination unit. Since this resource had not been needed on previous fires, he was able to set the standard for the rest of the state. The RRFR COVID Decon Team was created and was able to go out on



PM Brandon Kaupa uses the hypochlorous spray to decon a helicopter used on a wildland fire.

incidents and decontaminate all deployed apparatuses using the hypochlorous acid spray. They would also do routine health screening and temperature checks on all fire personnel. Other departments followed our lead by implementing similar teams.

The team also assisted the City's Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department in removing trees in the Rio



Capt. Jason DeBerg uses a chainsaw to cut down a cottonwood in Willow Creek trail in the Bosque.

Grande Bosque that were hazardous to visitors to the Willow Creek trail. With a team of sawyers and the bull dozer, dozens of damaged trees were cut down and removed.

Here is a list of the deployments and the resources sent to fires in 2020:

- East Well Fire – Fuel Truck and bull dozer
- Lumberton Fire – Ambulance COVID Decon Team
- Luna Fire - Ambulance COVID Decon Team
- Vics Peak Fire – Division Supervisor and Medical Unit Leader
- Tadpole Fire - Ambulance COVID Decon Team
- Ojo de Los Casos Fire – Medical Unit Leader
- Los Chacos Fire – Division Supervisor

The goals for the coming year for RRFR's Wildland Team include having our new members on more deployments to gain valuable experience on incidents and in training, and to help them continue to work on their task books. We have already added new members onto the team, four to the suppression division and four to the dozer team. The dozer team just had a week-long training for their new members. Building the team and adding experience will help us identify and prepare the new leaders to take over managing the team in the future. Due to the predicted weather and continued drought forecast for the Southwest, we are planning for the Wildland Strike Team to be more involved in responding to and mitigating fires in our region. The team will also be ready to participate in our annual Bosque and City patrols around the 4th of July holiday. Our team is ready after completing our annual refresher, pack-test, and evaluating our gear.

As 2020 began, we were faced with multiple challenges; Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) shortages and availability of these supplies from numerous vendors, including the state; and constantly adapting our emergency responses to patients who were potentially infected with COVID-19 pandemic. All of this was accomplished while medical professionals raced to study the virus and communicate the most up-to-date information so we could implement and apply changes as frequent as daily. Through a combined effort with our response partners in Albuquerque (Albuquerque Fire Rescue, Albuquerque Ambulance Service, Sandoval and Bernalillo County Fire Departments), all entities had open channels of communication with updates and response policies, which proved to be beneficial.

Some of these policies are still in use today, and include screening 911 calls, and a response guidebook, which captures best practices and response requirements. RRFR remained on the front lines and continued to respond to everyday calls for service without compromising patient care or our core values. By the end of the calendar year we were seeing the start of vaccinations that were offered to all first responders, as well residents in congregate living facilities. Most of RRFR's personnel began receiving vaccines in December and we continued to offer shots for the next several months to help keep our crews safe. Although some RRFR members and/or their families had tested positive for COVID, nobody suffered significant symptoms.

Our response to the pandemic kept us pretty busy in the EMS Division, but we also kept our focus on maintaining our cutting-edge response to medical emergencies through the adoption of special skills and new treatment regimens. Our EMS providers reached a milestone in the efforts of achieving a return of spon-

taneous circulation (ROSC) for patients who presented in cardiac arrest. In 2020 we collectively achieved a 31% ROSC for these critical incidents.

Keeping our community safe and healthy was only part of our efforts. The Occupational Health and Wellness program aims to keep our firefighters healthy as well. This past year, we welcomed our new Occ-Med provider, Physician's Assistant Hector Stephanson. He has 20 years of experience as a PA with a primary emphasis on family medicine and at least six years in occupational medicine.

We also continued our efforts to augment our EMS paramedic response as we welcomed two new home-grown paramedics to our ranks. Roman Lucero and Chris Garcia completed the rigorous 11-month training program during a very stressful and challenging year. Shortly after they completed the paramedic program and were ready to practice their new skills, three more firefighters accepted the challenge to attend paramedic school in 2021. They will continue a long-standing tradition of our department having a reputation for the most successful students attending local training academies. While the classroom education, clinicals, field internships and testing are challenging, the pride of successful completion is something I would challenge all RRFR members to experience in some capacity.

As we look at the coming year, we will continue our cautious approach for providing for the safety of our crews and the public through the remaining months of the pandemic. We will also continue to look to medical research to learn the best practices among EMS agencies across the country so that we can continue to update our protocols and delivery of pre-hospital medicine.

MESSAGE FROM THE MEDICAL DIRECTOR

BY DARREN BRAUDE, M.D. EMT-P

It goes without saying that 2020 was dominated by the pandemic. Our personnel were on the frontlines from the beginning and continued to provide our community with the highest quality prehospital patient care despite unknown risks to themselves. Thank goodness that we had no serious job-related illnesses. Infectious diseases have always been a part of this job, and they will continue to be part of the job moving forward, though the scope and unknowns associated with COVID-19 obviously felt different. I am encouraged, however, to see how quickly we can adapt and how well appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) can protect us.

I am super appreciative of Batt. Chief Adam Arrossa's leadership of the EMS Division through these challenging times with great support from the executive staff and hard work from our amazing Paramedic Lieutenants. We also relied heavily on the train-



ing division to get the word out as things seemed to be changing every week. Oh wait, they really were changing that fast!

In the midst of the craziness, our Physician Assistant Mr. Jeremy Kersey moved out-of-state to accept a great position which left a big hole in the Occ-Med program. We were lucky to interview and hire PA Hector Stephenson to fill this spot. Hector works full time at the UNMH Cancer Center and brings a wealth of military occupational medicine experience to the position. Keeping our crews healthy and safe remains my highest priority.

I'm looking forward to getting beyond pandemic response in 2021 and returning our focus to core mission areas. We have exciting developments on the horizon including more EMS Special Skills and welcoming newly promoted Lieutenants into the group.

Awards, Promotions & Retirements



OEM's Rose Martinez was presented with the Support Staff of the Year from the state.



Dep. Chief Richard Doty retired after 20-years of service to the community. He was welcomed home by his wife and daughter after his final ride.



Top: Batt. Chief Dave Patterson completed 25 years of service. He is shown here with his family after he completed his final shift.



Brad Kornrumph was promoted to Captain.



Capt. Erick Petz completed 20-years in the fire service. Some of his time was with Los Alamos County F.D.



FF Joe Beaver was greeted by his family after completing 20-years of service to RRFR.

Awards, Promotions & Retirements



2020 Award Winners, from left: Brent Philipbar, FF of the Year; Jeff Wenzel, Fire Officer of the Year; Dave Hoeksema, Admin Staff of the year; and Aric Ray, EMS Provider of the year.



FF Ricardo Perea retired after completing 19-years of service with RRFR.



Daniel Wild was promoted to the position of Captain.



Capt. Valerie West completed 19 years and retired from the department.



Ryan Floersheim was promoted to the position of Battalion Chief.



From Left: Capt. Dwayne Marino received his retirement badge; Capt. Erick Petz and FF/PM Tony Rodgers were presented with their retirement axes; and Dep. Chief Jimmy DeFillippo and Batt. Chief Marc Sandoval were recognized for 20-years of service at a City Council meeting in January.

The Fire Prevention Division began the year with the anticipation of implanting new programs and increasing our community outreach.

We took the lead on a number of projects to increase the Division's participation in programs that aim at preventing fires. This included the Fire Prevention Team, which was a concept that became a reality in 2019. This past year the team had the goal of providing specially-trained firefighters to increase our delivery of strong fire-prevention messages to school kids, civic organizations, and other groups. Even though it was virtual, the five Fire Prevention Team members provided a lot of assistance to our successful fire prevention program in October. For this year's program, we added video and virtual opportunities for the schools and the general public through social media. Our engagement with students was increased due to this delivery method.

On the development front, we continued to serve as a liaison for new and existing businesses to better understand the code requirements and navigate through the approval process. The Fire Prevention staff completed approximately 1,500



Sparky the Fire Dog celebrated his 70th Birthday!

commercial inspections in 2020, which had decreased slightly from the previous year, due to the COVID shut down.

Residential building and subdivision planning also kept our staff busy as they worked with the City's Planning Review Committee on these new neighborhoods. We reviewed more applications than the last three years, which indicates growth in our community. We also assisted in the opening of two schools by providing review of fire safety systems and

egress routes, as well as the next phase for Presbyterian Rust Medical Center expansion.

Lastly, we were able to successfully transfer to a paperless plan review process with great success. This has increased delivery of permits in less time to make the process more efficient for the applicant.

The Fire Prevention Division will continue to work towards our goal to complete our required International Code Council (ICC) certifications by coordination with the training division in State Fire Marshal's Office. ICC gives us a roadmap to follow for building and occupant safety standards.

Here are our goals for 2021:

Fire Prevention at a Glance

- **Fire Inspections—1,493**
- **Plan Reviews—287**
- **Fire Protection System Reviews—25**
- **Special Events Staffed—0, due to COVID**
- **Children Taught Fire Prevention—7,200**

- All Inspector/Investigators to become Inspector II ICC certified.
- All Inspector/Investigators to become ICC certified Plan Reviewers.
- Increase our community outreach by collaborating on smoke detector installation program.
- Continue to work with the Fire Prevention Team on public education programs.

Rio Rancho Citizens Support RRRFR's Effort to Replace Apparatus

Rio Rancho's citizens approved the renewal of the Public Safety GO Bond in 2020. With these funds we were able to hold a push-in ceremony of the new Engine-7. Thank You, Rio Rancho!





Indeed 2020 was a unique year, and the Rio Grande Basin Heavy Technical Rescue Team (RGBHTRT) adapted and improvised to make it as productive as possible. While our calls for service and training hours were both down from previous

years, the addition of new members and high quality of training that we could conduct allowed us to still move forward despite the challenges of the global pandemic.

The year began with the team welcoming nine new members who provided a good mix of experienced and new firefighters to the team's makeup. All of these new additions are motivated and excited to start this new chapter of their public safety career. Battling heat, distancing, and mask wearing, all nine members were able to complete their Rope Rescue Technician training in July. The majority of our remaining grant-funded training money was either rolled into the 2021 training calendar, or reallocated to equipment purchases. The team's leadership used the opportunity for equipment replacement transition from using 12.5mm to 11mm rope for high-angle rescues.

After a record-year for incident responses in 2019, 2020 saw our calls for service decrease by around half; however several of these incidents had a big impact on the lives of victims. On two separate occasions, families with young children became stranded in the Rio Grande after their boats failed. Team members were able to bring all members safely ashore. The surge in civilian river traffic gave our team the opportunity to spend a lot of time on the water in non-emergency situations as well, performing river patrols every weekend through the summer. Team members also used these opportunities to educate people on the river about boat and water safety.

What started out as an Eagle Scout project turned into a regional safety initiative as the team collaborated with Corrales F.D. to install "River Mile" markers along the Rio Grande. These markers will give users of the waterway a location to assist resources in finding them if an emergency were to occur.

The team is looking at growth and continued involvement in rescuing people in austere conditions in the coming year. We now have 18 members on the team, the experience of responding to hundreds of incidents, nearly half a million dollars in awarded grant money funding our training and equipment, and thousands of training hours have made our team a valuable resource within our community and throughout our region. As we look ahead, we would like to pay tribute to the team's founder and Team Coordinator, Battalion Chief Dave Patterson, who retired in December. Chief Patterson started this team in 2008 and championed its progress until his retirement. We are all grateful for his passion and dedication and hope to make him proud as we move forward.



Team members install river mile posts along the Rio Grande. Team Founder, Batt. Chief (Ret.) Dave Patterson, is far right.



The team performed a rescue of a young horse that fell into a septic tank in Placitas.



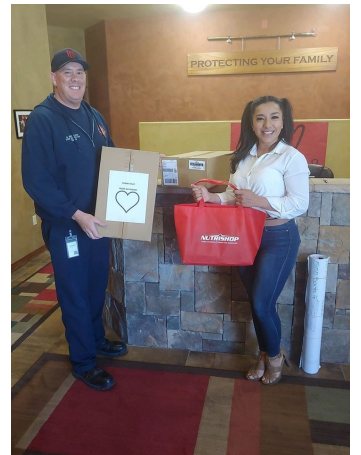
Rescues from the Rio Grande are common during summer months.

Thank You Rio Rancho!

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RRFR LOVES our community. When the COVID-19 pandemic began to shut down our interactions with residents, they came out strong to show their support for first responders. Deliveries of meals, candy and cookies, signs of support, red ribbons, and even hand-made artwork began to arrive at many of our facilities. These acts of appreciation helped to keep our crews strong and focused on service to the community during a very difficult time. The men and women of RRFR say thank you, Rio Rancho.





Firefighters responded to a house fire off of Meadowlark in August. The fire was mainly in the attic space, so the crews cut ventilation holes in the roof to assist in removing heat and smoke.



A traffic crash on US 550 in February.



FF Steven Castillo on the scene of a shed fire in December.



Crews transport a gunshot victim to a medical helicopter in June.



Left: Firefighters needed to extricate victims from a crash in July.



Right: The old Rio Rancho Inn had a fire in January.

PEER SUPPORT TEAM PROVIDES ASSISTANCE

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By Batt. Chief Ryan Floersheim

One thing that didn't change during the strange year that was 2020 was the perfect storm of repeated exposure to traumatic events, sleep deprivation, and a lingering stigma against seeking help that has created the epidemic of mental health disorders within the fire service. In fact, a new study from the Journal of Occupational Health Psychology revealed upward of 20-percent of firefighters will meet the broad criteria for PTSD at some point in their careers, which is comparable to service members returning from combat and almost three times more than the general population. This is important because those with PTSD are six times more likely to eventually consider suicide.

In 2020 RRFR's Peer Support Team remained committed to serving as the first line of mental health defense for our department's members as we all navigate our way through our careers and our lives. The team is completely member-driven, with no reporting of information to our administration to ensure privacy. The 10 members of the team, which are a diverse group of all ranks from every corner of the department, have all signed confidentiality forms and operate within our strict guideline to ensure when you seek help from the team that your trust is honored and kept. A recent study within the Chicago Fire

Department revealed 28-percent of its members avoid their peer support team even when its services can be helpful for fear that their private information will not remain confidential. RRFR's team is dedicated to changing that stigma in our little corner of the world. As always, we need your help to accomplish that goal.

In 2020 the team conducted 140 peer support encounters, a 10-percent increase from the year before. Most of those were first time interactions and included members from not only RRFR, but Rio Rancho and Albuquerque Police Departments, Albuquerque Fire Rescue, and across the region. We conducted a department-wide survey to gauge our team's effectiveness and plan on adjusting our operations accordingly in the years to come. In spite of the strict COVID restrictions, the team was able to send two new members through PSPG's rigorous four-

day advanced peer support and crisis mitigation course needed to join our ranks. This training was made possible through a sizeable donation the team received from another organization with the same mission. Several members also attended the Applied Suicide Intervention Skills training class sponsored by AFR. The team also participated in over 50-hours of ongoing training to add to our mental health toolbox to ensure we are prepared to help with any difficult circumstance life will hand you.



Looking forward to 2021 RRFR's Peer Support Team has plans to create new partnerships with our department's chaplains as well as our growing group of retirees, which our internal research has shown is at a distinct risk of suffering from mental health problems. We are collaborating with our department's command staff to become more involved immediately after you respond to difficult calls and, have plans on assigning every member of RRFR to a specific team member to further develop the bonds



Firefighters from across the state attended a Applied Suicide Intervention Skills training class, sponsored by AFR.

of trust needed to make our system function. We are constantly sending our members to new classes and, in addition to preparing to teach our introductory class to the next academy, are working on a mental health refresher course for the entire department. The team is always looking for new members, so if you or someone you know is up to the challenge, please get with either Team Coordinator, FF Mary Philips or Batt. Chief Ryan Floersheim for more details.

Need Assistance? Contact:

- BC Ryan Floersheim—rfloersheim@rrnm.gov
- FF Mary Philips—mphilips@rrnm.gov

Fire Prevention Team

We have seven dedicated operations personnel that are a part of the Fire Prevention Team. Last year with the pandemic restrictions, we were not able to go to the schools. So, we had to be creative with our efforts to deliver fire safety messages to our community.



The annual Open House went virtual in 2020 due to the pandemic.

Typically, during Fire Prevention Week, the team conducts school presentations, station tours, and fire extinguisher training. This year those large community events were transitioned online due to COVID-19. Team members conducted fire safety videos with the smoke trailer and at the fire stations. We had to focus our messaging platform by transitioning to educating the community via virtual learning and social media. One of the ways we increased our outreach was through printed flyers included in utility bills. This innovative approach was developed during our recent ISO evaluation.

Moving forward we will continue to think outside the box and come up with innovative ways to educate the children and the community. A few of the team members are enrolled in a Community Risk Reduction leadership (CRRL) conference this year that will be able to provide some ideas and motivation that we will be able to incorporate within our department.

- Lt. Jessica Duron-Martinez

Honor Guard

As I'm sure all of you are very aware by now, the previous year put quite the hamper on life as we know it, including the debut of RRFR's Honor Guard Team. Needless to say, the team patiently and eagerly awaits for its time in the spotlight. We have procured a majority of the equipment with the biggest item (literally and monetarily) being uniforms. There are some small details that will distinguish RRFR MOS and members of the Honor Guard. I am also pleased to announce that we have

standardized the ordering process for Class A uniforms through the vendor with the help of Lt. Travis Locher. With hope on the horizon, we are again targeting our first event in the summer of 2021 (fingers crossed). Our gratitude goes out to all of you for your continued patience and support.

- FF/PM Aric Ray

EMS Bike Team

Rio Rancho Fire and Rescue's (RRFR) EMS Bike Team was getting ready for another stellar year and then everything shut down due to the pandemic. The team is primarily deployed to provide medical coverage for large outdoor events, local triathlons and races, as well as search and rescue missions in areas not accessible by vehicle. The restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 public health crisis caused many of these outdoor events to be cancelled. Hence, 2020 was a slow year for members of the team.

The upcoming year is filled with promise and expansion. The team is acquiring more gear to outfit two more bicycles with all necessary gear to effectively respond to emergencies. That means the team will be able to deploy two teams of two members to an incident or event. This will give us the capacity of four bicycles with all necessary equipment to render aid. The team is also looking in to getting a pull-behind trailer to mount on the bikes for use in special events and possibly Active Shooter training. This will help us transport more equipment and supplies for large events and training classes.



RRFR will be hosting an International Police Mountain Bike Association (IPMBA) EMS Cyclist course in May to train new members of the team. The class will be open to members of other fire departments to assist them with team development or growth. We are also planning to secure a certified bicycle mechanic to come teach a full day of bike maintenance to all Bike Team members. This will help us maintain our equipment in-house.

It is with much optimism that we venture into the year full of special events, response, and training for the EMS Bike Team.

- FF Jeremy Martinez

Parting Shots



Members of the Tech Rescue Team were able to train high-angle rescue techniques in the Rio Puerco using COVID-safe practices.



(Left) Fire Headquarters at sunrise; and (Right), the American Flag was flown by RRFR and BCFD for the funeral of a former Bernalillo County Fire Chief.



The stand-by crew at the July 4th fireworks display watch the fireworks from the Kubota at City Center.



(Top) A firefighter uses a saw to gain access to a garage where a fire started; and (Right) Academy class #15 performed their live burns in Socorro with Sandoval County F.D. cadets.

